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AIRGRAM

A-082

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EXCISE

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HANDLING INDICATOR

TO : Department of State

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BUREAU OF

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RS/AN
ANALYSIS BRANCH

DATE: 17 April 1973

FROM : Amembassy GUATEMALA

EO 11652: XGDS2

SUBJECT: TAGS: PINS

SUBJECT: INTERNAL SECURITY:

REF :

Monthly Report of Incidents
DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
MARCH 1973

REVIEWED BY

DATE

PORTIONS DENIED AS INDICATED

SUMMARY: It was a relatively quiet March, at least for Guatemala. The month's total of 65 press-reported incidents of a probable political nature was about on par with the 1972 monthly average (63), but the March total included 12 victims who were found in March but who had been killed in previous months. The Government was blamed in the press for eight of the month's shootings and kidnappings.

but none of these victims were of any prominence. The far Left made its biggest media splash in months with synchronized detonations of some 11 propaganda bombs on the South Coast, but the effect was momentary and minor. There was no indication, however, that the PGT or the FAR were behind the March killings of three policemen.

END SUMMARY

Statistics: The March press recorded 65 incidents of violence which appeared to be of a probable political nature, a total which was somewhat higher than 1973's January-February monthly average (52) and about on par with 1972's monthly average (63). However, the month's count was somewhat misleading in that 12 "incidents" involved badly decomposed bodies which were found in a clandestine graveyard on March 7 and 8, but which had obviously been buried in previous months. In all, there were 42 assassinations this month, the highest figure since July 1972, and 14 kidnappings. The victims included: ten small-scale farmers and agrarian workers, 3 members of the private and public security forces,

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4 common criminals, a municipality employee and a high school student. The South Coast, with 42% of the month's incidents, led the country's regions in violence for the ninth straight month. Based on press accounts, the far Left appeared involved in 8% of the month's incidents, all of a propaganda nature; the Government's security forces in 32% (see below); and the remaining 60% were not directly attributable.

Comment: As there were no prominent victims and the far Left was relatively inactive, it was a relatively quiet month for Guatemala.

Security Forces in Clandestine Actions? The security forces may have been involved in as many as one-third of the month's press-reported incidents. Twelve badly decomposed bodies, one of which was subsequently identified as a common criminal, were found in a clandestine graveyard near the Atlantic Highway some 21 kilometers from Guatemala City (Guatemala 1090). While a number of observers privately implicated the Government, publicly the discovery resulted in considerable news coverage but little commentary. In other actions, relatives of victims accused the Government security forces of two assassinations and six kidnappings, including those of four South Coast small-scale farmers (parcelarios). In addition, three others with criminal records were found shot to death. Finally, a peasant dramatically sought asylum in the offices of the San Carlos University's Law Student Association at the end of the month, reportedly in order to escape an assassination attempt by a Santa Rosa farm administrator and his Mobile Military Police (PMA) escorts. The Government promised to investigate.

Comment: The dearth of commentary in the press and elsewhere on the discovery of twelve murdered corpses, an incident which would probably cause considerable outrage in most other civilized countries, is itself an apt commentary on the degree of acceptance here of the country's high assassination rate. Much of the capital's media and society are well inured to violence providing, of course, that the victims are of no prominence and are for the most part disposed of outside the Guatemala City limits.

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Far Left Propaganda: The PGT (perhaps with the collaboration of the FAR) detonated a reported 11 propaganda bombs this month in various South Coast Departments, most of which went off in synchronized explosions on March 25 and 26 in several villages in Suchitepequez and Retalhuleu Departments. According to one press account, the bomb leaflets made note of the "repression, kidnappings, and tortures of farm workers and peasants on the South Coast."

Comment: The propaganda explosions gave the far Left its biggest press splash in months, but the coverage was short-lived and made little impact in the capital.

Other Actions: Several attacks on the security forces and one alleged kidnapping also made the news this month, but there was no indication that the PGT or the FAR were involved. Unknown assailants in separate actions killed a Treasury Policeman in Jutiapa, a private policeman employed by the Vanguardia protective agency in Guatemala City and the Chief of Investigations of the SIPP protective agency also in Guatemala City. In addition, Enrique Florido Granda, the son of a Zone 9 merchant who is also a South Coast cattleman, may have been kidnapped in mid-March, but there was no available information outside of conflicting press accounts.

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